

# JOEY APPLESHOE

Call me Joey Appleshoe. I'm the real Joey Appleshoe, if there is such a thing. I'm a legend, an urban myth, a mythological creature, a throwback to when giants roamed the earth. But I'm here to tell you the truth; I'm just a Midwestern farm boy trying to serve humanity and save my soul and if I have to make love to a few homely women along the way, so be it. I didn't set out to be some kind of hero, half worshipped, half scorned and mostly disbelieved by all. I was born Duane Hagadorn and my ambitions didn't much exceed those of my father's, a small town farmer. I just wanted my own farm and to do things my own way, but the vicissitudes of life and being open minded will lead you into all kinds of different directions. Most of the legendary stuff about Joey Appleshoe has been made up or added on to a few scraps of truth. However I must admit in my own sly false modesty that I am uncommonly tall, handsome, and well hung. When I say handsome, get the Hollywood pretty boy image out of your mind and allow a nobler, more rugged image to form. Really though, I am the result of, and Joey Appleshoe is the product of, one man, Mr. V. As much as I am an individual or have grown a soul, it is all due to the influence of Mr. Victor Voinovich. So this story is as much about him as it is about me. In our over-exploited twenty-four hour a day internet generated heroes and legends, Mr. V flew under the radar throughout his life. He deeply affected everyone who came in contact with him but he never sought attention or fame; if anything he deliberately drove admirers away from himself by his obnoxious and unpredictable behavior. Maybe it was my own obnoxious qualities that allowed me to get closer to him than most but I'm not even sure what that means when it comes to this enigma. Mr. V remains a mystery though and even I know little of his true story, so by telling my story perhaps some light will be shed on Mr. V at the same time.

I started out as a farmer with limited potential and a lot of unanswered questions. I probably would have spent my whole life in Marseilles, Michigan (pronounced mar-SALES locally), a farmer with a small family if the farm hadn't gone belly up and kicked me out into the greater world of unforeseen destiny. I

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was married to Mary, a lovely but sad woman I met at the local clinic. She was a nurse about my age (mid twenties at the time) and she needed rescuing and I was chump enough to think it was my duty. Her father worked at the nuclear power plant in New Haven and he was a decent guy even though his job will go down in history alongside the Nazi death camps. He was easy going and always liked to point out that you get more radiation from wearing a wristwatch with a glow in the dark dial than you get from living next to a nuclear power plant. I wouldn't know; I don't have either one near me. As a matter of fact I try to stay away from watches and phones as much as possible. Mary was what passes for ambitious in this world and she became a nurse after school. I dropped out of Michigan State University after two years because my father had a heart attack and I had to return to the farm to get the harvest in. Even though my father recovered I never went back to school. I didn't really know what I wanted to do anyway. I was an Ag major but my Ag research was mostly devoted to growing marijuana in my apartment closet. One of the few classes I truly enjoyed was one on the films of Ingmar Bergman. I could relate to that pessimism. My family was Lutheran also and the bleak Swedish landscape looked a lot like Michigan farmland in the winter. The film, "Winter Light" was a favorite and its theme of loss of faith rang true to me. So I felt trapped in Marseilles and Mary seemed like part of a bigger world; at least she'd finished college and she wasn't from Marseilles, two things in her favor. Plus, she was uncommonly kind and sweet and I asked myself Why has no one married this woman yet? She moaned and complained about living with her parents and I thought the enemy of my enemy is my friend or something like that. We got along okay and I don't know where things would have gone but Mary became pregnant and that was that.

Being married to Mary didn't seem like such a bad fate. Mary was reasonably intelligent, above average in looks and she even had big tits, always a plus. A year or so after Samuel, our son, was born we managed to buy our own farm and it looked like the good life was ours. Of course that was all illusion as I slowly came to realize that I was married to a boring woman I didn't give a fig about and I was buried under a mountain of debt that wasn't going anywhere, just sitting on my back and mounting. To help make the mortgage payments I took a job on the night shift working at a local machine tool shop. Mary worked at the hospital and we weren't even in the house at the same time very much. I'd hardly gone anywhere in my brief life and now it looked like I wasn't about to. Most things

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either get better or worse and thankfully things got` worse which snapped us out of the numb lifestyle that had become ours.

What can I say about Mary without sounding unnecessarily critical? Everyone loves Mary but that's mostly because she is the salt of the earth and never rocks the boat. There is no one more despised than the intelligent man, or woman, so you'd better hide it and play dumb if you want to get along. Mary had nice liberal opinions but they were just knee jerk liberalism; she didn't really know what she believed in and not even if she believed in God or not. Hearing her defend the status quo used to drive me nuts. If I was feeling low she would pester me with questions about what was wrong. If I told her my arm was hurt from work she would come back with "Why didn't you wear that Ace bandage like I told you?" Or if I complained that some guy in town was an asshole she'd say, "Well, he has it tough with his wife in a wheelchair." Personally I prefer to hate an asshole without any mitigating circumstances. And then there was the constant little kisses like on a 1950's television show. You had to give a peck when you got home, when you went out, when you went to bed, or just to top off any discussion. It was like saluting a superior officer. Unfortunately it seemed like all this goodness just brought out the worst in me. It's embarrassing now to think of what petty fights we had. These weren't knock down yelling and screaming fights. These were why don't you ever read a book? type of fights. Basically she bored me so I picked on her. She never read the paper and wanted me to tell her what was in it. She could never slip into silly little philosophical questioning about the absurdities of everyday life; with her it always came down to paying the bills, cleaning the house, looking after Samuel, responsibilities and duties. Sure, those things are important but there's more to life. Of course I was a dreamer or loser as I spent more and more time reading and trying to learn about other religions and other cultures. There's not much opportunity for that in Marseilles but I worked my way through all the foreign films in our local video store. Mary didn't watch too many with me as she was always too tired. In fact, Mary was always tired or sick or pissed off. We both knew that all the work plus the farm was killing us. Mary believed that the only thing ailing our marriage was our money woes. I knew this was true but in my heart I also knew that even money won't make two people compatible. I think that Mary loved me but didn't like me, whereas I liked Mary but didn't love her. And that wasn't going to change.

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Sammy was an adorable little kid. He had very whitish blonde hair like his parents. He was very quiet and has remained so and I fear the lack of love between his parents had a lot to do with that. But what can you do? You can't wish everything was perfect no matter how hard you try. The best you can do is face the truth and do what needs to be done. I dealt with the dead home life by reading a lot or going fishing. I always used to take Samuel along wanting him to enjoy the sweet philosophical charms of fishing, but Samuel never cared for the outdoors and eventually I kind of gave up on making him an outdoorsman.

When our interest rate went up on our adjustable mortgage there was no way out. We were already going backwards but this was the death knoll. The farm going belly up was probably the best thing that could have happened to us. At least that broke us out of our rut. I could have gone back to work on my Dad's farm but there wasn't enough money in that to support two families. I half-heartedly started to look for other jobs but didn't want any of the positions I was applying for. I have to give Mary credit. It was her idea to look for a nursing job out of state. At least she had a profession that people wanted. At first we thought of going to Florida for the winter. There are a lot of jobs caring for old people down there. But then what would we do in the summer, sweat and melt in the heat or return to Michigan? So we decided on California where Mary found a job in San Diego. California didn't appeal to me especially but I was broken down at the time and was grateful that Mary was taking the initiative. Mary figured that a new beginning was all we needed and I just wanted to get as far away from my failure as possible, so California it was. The job turned out to be somewhere near Torrey Pines, a beautiful area but way too crowded for my taste. I can see why people loved California and wanted to move there but California as Promised Land must have ended about fifty years ago now. You know how it is; once a great place gets discovered it gets overrun and spoiled. Everyone wants to be the last one in and then lock the door behind them, but they just keep coming. I didn't know what kind of a job I might find with my two years of Ag in college. We were living in a condo in what most people would call the good life. There was even a little clubhouse, pool, and sauna. I didn't go to the pool much because my Michigan farm body was blindingly white. Plus the young girls there looked so delicious that it drove me to distraction. If I took Sammy to the pool with me the young girls would coo and fuss over us and that was okay once in awhile but still my desires were killing me so I mostly stayed in and read. At the time I was working my way through the Sartre trilogy, *The Roads to Freedom*. I knew I had to get a job and

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was reading the want ads every day but was still resisting working at a gas station or such. It seems most of the jobs are for salesmen who are eager to work on a team of self-achievers and I sure as hell knew that wasn't me. Then I saw a job that was sort of related to my agriculture background. The job was working at Del Mar racetrack just up the road from Torrey Pines. Have you ever been to Del Mar? Man, is that a beautiful track. The funny thing is that I never considered myself a horse person and still don't even though it turned out I've worked with horses on and off ever since. I think the job said "assistant trainer" or something like that but a more accurate description would have been "stable boy". The good thing was you didn't have to be clean or proper. As Thoreau said, "Beware of jobs that require a new set of clothes." I didn't particularly care about horses but I care about humans even less and I didn't have to get too involved with the humans at the track. I started to open up at the track though, and the best part of the job was that it allowed me to be as odd as I was inclined because at a racetrack there are a lot of odd people.

Driving up to Del Mar is an impressive sight. The track is right near the ocean and the grandstands rise up majestically in a large open area. Just approaching the place is exciting. They go all out for the floral displays, never mind the severe water shortages in the area. When it comes to gambling, there is no water shortage. Some of the glamour would wipe off as I drove around the backside of the track to the entrance for the horse trailers and other work crews at the track. Of course most of the dirty work was done by Mexicans but I didn't mind. That's one good thing I got from being a Lutheran farm boy; I'm not too proud to work. It's not that I like work, but I'm not afraid of it or try to do the minimum. Early on I was taught that a job worth doing is worth doing well and in this age of slackers just that attitude will earn you a lot of admirers. There is an interesting hierarchy at a racetrack. Of course the owners and trainers are the real gods around there. Then you have all the people who work at the track from the managers, ticket sellers, food and beverage people, security parking lot guys, cleanup crews, etc. The jockeys are in a world apart. They tend to hold themselves pretty aloof although I met a few who were pretty friendly, like the great Hector Gomez but maybe that's because he smoked pot with some of the stable guys. Then there are the vets, groomers, horseshoers and other types who attend to the horses, and finally at the bottom of the heap was me, stable boy and shit sweeper extraordinaire.

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This was a whole new world to me and I wouldn't have felt comfortable going into the clubhouse entrance anyway. Now it wouldn't faze me and I can easily imagine Mr. V sitting in the clubhouse with a big cigar, but at the time I was still a farm boy and not yet the great Joey Appleshoe at home anywhere with anyone. Gradually though I felt at home behind the scenes, so to speak, among the horse trailers, trucks, stables, horses, and hangers-on. My job was so low as to make me invisible which is good. It's sort of like being a busboy; you're so low everyone ignores you and no one wants your job so you can do pretty much whatever you want. But I worked hard anyway; I'm just like that. Technically I worked for Bill Burroughs, one of the trainers who had about six horses at the track. And he worked for a Mr. Freidkin, the owner of all the horses. I'm not sure what he did but I heard a rumor that he made his money in Hollywood management. I really didn't give a shit. I was more interested in where Hector Gomez got his pot than what Hollywood star Freidkin was representing. Burroughs was an interesting character though. He was no nonsense and he got results. Personally I think he carried the strong silent routine a bit far but he was a winner and appearances do matter in this sport when it comes to trusting your millions of dollars of horseflesh to someone. I started to notice the owner's wife Victoria hanging around the track and Burroughs a lot more than Mr. Freidkin. They were very careful not to show any overt affection but it seemed clear that he was doing a little horse whispering in her ear.

The stables are pretty large and go on for rows and rows. I started work at seven in the morning and the atmosphere was very quiet and peaceful in the early hours. People were relaxed and friendly in the morning and things became increasingly more serious and tenser as you approached the one o'clock post time for the first race. It was still very early in the morning and I was cleaning out one of the stalls when I was seized by the notion that it was time to pass some major legislation. I hadn't yet cleaned out Big Boy's stall so the most direct way to alleviate my need was to contribute to the pile that Big Boy had already left. Of course I couldn't compete with Big Boy but I would add my modest contribution. Being a farmer, it was nothing to me to squat in the fields and do my duty wherever I happened to be. Everything was fine and major legislation was being passed when a wiry little fellow, bigger than a jockey but a hell of a lot smaller than yours truly happened to stroll by the stall and glance in.

"What the hell are you doing?"

"I'm doing my knitting and now you made me drop a stitch you little bastard."

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“Jesus buddy, don’t you know there’s a portajohn at the end of the stables?”

“That’s too far to walk. When a session is called to order and there is legislation to be passed you have to answer the roll call. Besides if you examine the bill afterwards you can assess the State of the Union.”

“The State of the Union is shit and I don’t need to look at your turds to know that.”

“Are you going to stand there and watch? You’re affecting my deliberations.”

“Oh yeah, like I’m a guy who likes to watch big doofuses sitting in a pile of shit and grunting. Where’s Big Boy? I’m here to give him a trim.”

“I thought you looked like a hairdresser. Hey, hand me that newspaper over there.”

“Isn’t it a little dark in there to read?”

“No, I just want to clean up after this session of congress. I’ll show you where I tied up Big Boy.”

“I don’t know if he’s going to like you shitting in his stall.”

“Funny, he hasn’t said anything to me about it.”

I finished my business and led him to another stall I’d already cleaned where I’d put Big Boy. That stall’s horse was already out on the track warming up. Big Boy looked calm like the big fat prima donna he was. That horse was worth more than a house, even in Del Mar, yet he hadn’t won a race at this season’s meet yet. The little guy put a harness on Big Boy and led him out. He wasn’t Big Boy’s owner or trainer but I thought I’d seen him around before.

“What’s your name?”

“McCormack.”

“You gonna trim his hooves?”

“That’s the idea. What’s your name?”

“Duane. Duane Hagadorn.”

I held out my hand to shake.

“I think I’ll pass on the hand shaking considering you’re coming from the halls of Congress.”

“Yeah that’s smart. You don’t want to get your hands dirty while you’re bent under that horse’s ass scraping shit out of his hooves. You got a first name?”

“Pat.”

He walked over to his old pickup truck parked nearby and started to pull out his horseshoeing tools. He had a little forge in the bed of his truck, boxes of shoes

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and nails, clippers, files and other tools I didn't understand. Pat moved slow and confidently around the horse so as not to spook him. He frequently talked to and coaxed the horse continually in a low voice meant to reassure the horse and let the horse know where he was at all times. I kept up by the head of the horse and out of the way.

"Well Big Boy, do you know who's been shitting in your stall? That's right. Get a good look at the tall skinny fellow standing there. He's been shitting in your stall."

"He looks proud that I shit in his stall."

"Duane, I think you better go down to the portajohn; you're still full of shit."

"Do you work on many horses here?"

"I've got about fifteen or twenty at the moment. I don't want to do any more than that. If you take on too many horses you tend to rush your work and that can be critical in this business. I'll tell you, next to the jockeys I'm the most important person when it comes to a horse winning or finishing last or worse yet pulling up lame. I know more about these horses than the vet does, or at least about their feet and legs and that's what counts. Even a simple trim like this is critical. This hoof has to be level and when that shoe fits right he has to land just right so he doesn't pull or strain in any one direction. You see right there? A lot of people would probably miss it, even the great Burroughs, but if that crack spreads in this hoof it could mean weeks off for this horse and then Mr. Friedkin wouldn't be happy."

Pat talked as he worked all in one continual flow, unhurried, efficient, and capable. He spent about ten minutes on each hoof, slicing thin slices of hoof off the edges and reshaping the whole hoof. Then he took a giant file and worked it down, carefully surveying the results, and then putting new shoes on.

"Is Burroughs as good as they say?"

"Yeah he is. He's not God, but around here he's about as good as they get."

"Is he having a thing with Mrs. Friedkin?"

"You better stick to cleaning stables."

"She's got unfulfilled trophy wife written all over her."

"Yeah, she's a high maintenance woman. I like 'em proud though. She's a thoroughbred just like these horses."

"Is that why she hangs around this place?"

"That, and money."

"It sure looks like she's got something for Burroughs."



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Pat moved around from the rear of the horse. He gave me an intense stare from behind his horn-rimmed glasses and with a slight grin he said, "She likes jockeys."

"You're shitting me."

"No, a lot of women like jockeys. Just because you're tall you think all women like tall men, but size doesn't mean shit."

"Are you just saying that Mr. McCormack because you're a little fellow?"

"It ain't what you got it's how you use it."

"Oh yeah? Maybe you're the one who ought to go down to the porta john."

He didn't answer but kept on working. He was a small fellow but wiry and you could tell he was strong by the way he lifted the horses hooves or threw his weight against the horse to steady it. I figured I'd gone a little too far and decided just to shut up and watch. When he was done we stood there and talked a little more. Pat was dressed all in denim and looked a little like a cowboy. He didn't wear cowboy boots though; he wore work boots with steel toes to protect himself from getting stepped on by horses. He had on a nice hat, straw, but western with a wide brim. I had to get me a hat like that. Both of us had work to do so we didn't stand around long. Still, there was something I liked about the guy. He was so self-sufficient. He reminded me of Randy Flegler in high school. He was the coolest kid in high school simply because he didn't give a shit about what anybody else thought. I could tell that Pat was a prickly sort of guy like a porcupine which must turn a lot of people off but I wanted to find out more about him so I kept an eye out for his truck and when he was working on a horse I would hang around and shoot the breeze with him. He was an independent cuss and I could see he had a good thing going. His services were in demand and he pretty much picked his hours and his clients. Not that shoeing horses looked easy but I've done harder work on the farm. Cleaning out the stalls was harder work than he was doing.

I usually listened to the radio while I worked. I had a little boom box which I dragged around from stall to stall. Mostly I listened to the public radio station because I liked the classical music they played in the afternoon, plus there was the advantage of not having to listen to commercials. I can't stand having people try to shove shit down your throat. I'll even record sporting events so I can fast forward through the commercials. It's not that I'm susceptible to buying anything in the ads. It's just that I resent the presumption that I might even want what they are selling or even buy into the attitude that I want the life style they're advertising.

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One day when I was shoveling shit I was listening to a symphony on the radio when Pat walked by.

“Appalachian Spring.”

“What’s that?”

“Copland. Appalachian Spring. You like Copland?”

“Yeah, I guess so. I was just listening to the radio and wasn’t paying much attention, but yeah, I like Copland.”

“I do too, but I got a little tired of him. Thing is, if you’ve heard one Copland you’ve heard them all, Grand Canyon Suite, Billie the Kid, Fanfare for the Common Man.”

“You know a lot about Copland?”

“Not really. I’m a typical American; I know a little about a lot of things but nothing in depth. Who do you like?”

“In classical music? I don’t know. The obvious I guess; Beethoven.”

“You can’t go wrong there. The thing with American composers is that once you know their style all of their works are so similar. Like Bernstein, everything sounds like West Side Story. Or Gershwin, everything sounds like Rhapsody in Blue.”

“Everything? Don’t they just have a recognizable style then things tend to sound alike?”

“Sure, but they aren’t even close to creating the wide variety of a Beethoven, or even someone more modern like Debussy.”

“You know you’re the first person to say anything positive about the music I listen to. Usually I get comments that range from “What the hell are you listening to,” to “Turn that crap off.”

“Well, most people are pretty ignorant anyway, so what are you going to do? You’ve got to please yourself.”

We got to know each other a bit at a time like this. It got to be a daily thing to have at least one little conversation per day. That was like a little treat in the day mixed in with the hard work. I didn’t take too much interest in the actual races. I was too busy behind the scenes and I didn’t have any money to gamble with so I just ignored that side of things.

You know how bad things were at home when I actually looked forward to being at work and shoveling shit. Of course Samuel was always a treat. He was in day care by now and I usually picked him up on the way home from work. He was such a sweet little kid and always very chatty. He was very angelic, tall and skinny

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for his age with that whitish blonde hair. He looked a lot like me but he also looked a lot like Mary too. He amazed me how he always was so enthusiastic for the total destruction of the world. At school they would play with little model dinosaurs and the like. He loved the idea of dinosaurs running amok in the present day and devouring humans like French fries at McDonald's.

"Wouldn't that be cool," I'd add. "Then maybe the dinosaurs would say 'I like ketchup with my humans and they'd fill up a whole lake with ketchup so they could dip their humans in ketchup before eating them.'"

"Yeah, yeah, but don't forget, they've got to cook 'em first."

"Dinosaurs don't cook their food first. Who ever heard of a famous dinosaur cook?"

He loved aliens even more than dinosaurs. They were never the benevolent aliens like in E.T. No, his aliens were always the vicious bloodthirsty kind. He really wanted the aliens to get Biblical on our asses. Even now Samuel completely believes that there is intelligent life on other planets and they might be showing up with their death rays any day now. I'm more afraid that aliens might show up at my door in pairs dressed in white shirts and navy pants and have some damn pamphlet for me to read about Zork who died for our sins. So Samuel and I usually had a pretty good time imagining various disasters that we'd like to see befall the silly humans who had it coming. Mary didn't much care for the end of the world scenarios, especially at dinnertime. I think she dreaded serving anything with tomato sauce for all of the blood connotations Samuel made with the contents of his plate. I also like to turn off the gore when I'm eating. Poor Mary worked at a hospital and she had more than enough of suffering at her job. She wanted light and laughter at home but things were rather wooden especially once Samuel went to bed. Like all couples we had our routines. I told her a little about the scene at the track but most of the stories were pretty crude and somehow Mary's politeness got on my nerves. She talked some about her patients at work but unfortunately I couldn't stand to hear about people's problems and medical conditions. She could sense this and so told me less and less stories. Before dinner Samuel and I would roll around on the floor and build castles and forts and such. Dinner was always good; I've got to give Mary credit there, she's a good cook, but that's really not enough to base a relationship on. After Samuel went to bed things got really dull. We were both pretty tired to begin with and we didn't really have much to say to each other. We rarely went out. We didn't know any babysitters and didn't have

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much extra money anyway since most of our earnings were going to pay for our beautiful condo. It just didn't feel right to me. I missed our farmhouse where you could at least step out the door and piss in the open fields. Here, all the little light illuminating the walkway prevented that. Plus the fact that these apartments were in a little maze which reminded me of a bee hive and I was just one of the worker bees.

After dinner the TV would usually come on. I might watch a football game and Mary was semi-interested in sports. But if there wasn't a game on she would usually watch Law and Order or one of the CSI shows. She loved cops and robbers shows even when they were usually about serial killers murdering beautiful blonde girls in gruesome ways. I couldn't stand these shows. They make those disgusting things seem way too common and besides who wants to implant such negative things in your mind? Of course she liked doctor shows also which I also abhor for the same reasons. The most common denominator crap on TV easily entertained her. It drove me nuts to realize that I was spending my life with one of the masses. I got in the habit of going to the bedroom to read during these shows. I read a lot of history and biography at the time. Having dropped out of college I had a lot of gaps in my education. Truth is, I was just eager to learn. I gobbled up books like a good meal. I needed a lot of food for thought. I also read a lot of novels like Henry Miller, Jack Kerouac, Dostoyevsky, Hamsun, Edward Albee, Larry McMurtry, Wallace Stegner, and a lot of others. I guess it was kind of rude to leave Mary alone in the living room to watch her shows alone, but if I tried to watch with her I ended up mocking the shows and spoiling them for her or worse, I ended up insulting her for liking them in the first place.

And then of course there was always sex. At least we had that. Sex was always pretty good with Mary and she did have those lovely full breasts. She had about the finest breasts you'd ever want to see anywhere. The thing is though that all that great equipment needs to be attached to a brain to really be fun. Mary had such a beaten down attitude to life (and I didn't help by always picking on her) that sex lacked any zest. She enjoyed sex but she was more the sacrificial lamb than the sexy vixen. The male/female, domination/submission is a key element in sexual fervor, that's why Lady's Chatterley's lover is such a turn on for women. It's exciting to conquer a woman or be conquered, but in Mary's case sex was more of a duty or nightly exercise. One night it was a little better after we'd had a bit too much to drink and things got a little wild but neither of us were drinkers so this was not a normal thing to add to our repertoire.

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Anyway, it got to the point where I enjoyed being at the track more than being home. You know it's bad when you prefer shoveling shit to being with your family. Pat was the one person I really enjoyed talking to, everyone else just ignored me. Stable boys are at the bottom of the totem pole and even I couldn't get much out of the other stable boys who were either Chicanos or high school drop outs not much better than carnies. They were often sneaking off to smoke dope which looked a little tempting but I didn't want to be sucked any deeper into loserdom from which there would be no return. Maybe Mary was too normal for me but I definitely didn't see myself making a career out of shoveling shit and smoking weed hiding behind a pile of horseshit. I thought that maybe if I invited Pat to have dinner with Mary and me that that might perk up Mary a little and also get to know Pat on another level. I was anxious to show off Mary's cooking skills and also her large tits. It was always fun to watch men pretend they weren't impressed by her tits and watch them deliberately try not to stare at them and then catch them staring. In all honesty, since Joey Appleshoe is obliged to always tell the truth, I secretly was hoping that Pat would be tempted to have an affair with Mary. Somehow if I could drag Mary down to my perverse level I might remove a little of my own guilt for not being normal or appreciating her. I don't know how that would have helped my marriage but I just wanted to stir things up a little.

Pat came over on a Saturday night and he looked the same as the other days dressed in his western duds except that these clothes were clean and pressed and Pat looked pretty fresh himself.

"Mary, the cowboy is here."

"Jesus, it was a little hard to find your place."

"Why? Don't you like our Village? I don't know why the heck they called this place the Village; it doesn't look anything like any village I've ever seen."

"Americans like to name their plastic developments after extinct animals or old world charm that no longer exists. I've seen condos called The Olde English Green. They love to add those superfluous "E"s to words like old and shop."

"You mean like shoppe?"

"Yeah, shop-ee. Or like near here is the sea otter shopping mall. What the hell do sea otters have to do with shopping malls? They are definitely doomed now that they are naming shopping malls after them."

I walked Pat over to the kitchen where Mary was cooking. Her face was flushed from the heat of the kitchen and she smiled at Pat as she held out her

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hand. When I saw her through Pat's eyes she looked pretty damned good. I mean it doesn't get any better than a young, big titted woman all flushed from cooking in the kitchen.

"Hey Pat, do you want a beer?"

Mary handed us a couple of Dos Equis out of the fridge. Samuel was watching some kiddie video on TV, something about some bears living in gingerbread houses where rainbows were a daily occurrence. We walked into the other room.

"Hey Sammy, this is Pat, he's a real cowboy."

"Where's your horse?"

"I left him outside."

"Can I see him?"

"Maybe later; he's kind of shy. What are you watching?"

"The bears. I want to eat them."

"You want to eat the bears? What about those yummy houses they live in?"

"No, I want to eat the bears. Yum, yum, yum. Right Daddy, don't you want to eat the bears too?"

"Oh sure but first I would dip them in ketchup."

We went out on the little balcony with our beers. It was pretty quiet as we stood there looking down at the parking lot and the little courtyard of other apartments. A little foreign car pulled in and a cute girl got out. She lugged a bag of groceries out of the passenger's seat and headed to her apartment. Pat and I grew silent as we stared at her. We felt like hunters in the woods trying not to spook the game.

"Nice."

"Yeah, you should see them around the pool."

"Oh yeah?"

"Oh yeah."

After awhile Mary called us to the table. She had made burritos, big monsters covered in sauce and of course beans and rice and salad on the side. I got some more beer out of the fridge. As usual Samuel played with his food and didn't eat too much.

"So Pat, where do you live?" Mary asked.

"I've got this big fifth wheel which I live in. There's a trailer park not too far from here, about ten miles east from here away from the shore. Some of the other people at the track live there too. I own a little cabin up in the San Gabriel Mountains but I live in the fifth wheel when I'm working at the tracks."

## JOEY APPLESHOE

“Do you always work at the track?”

“Well, it’s never permanent because each track meet only lasts three or four months then all the horses move on to the next meet. After Del Mar it will be racing season at Santa Anita, near Pasadena. I’ll probably go there and work. I don’t mind moving around though because it keeps things fresh. On the one hand I get to know the regulars in the horse world and see them track to track but I also get to know different people from town to town.”

“Pat’s a carnie.”

“Well there is a little difference between a carnival and Santa Anita. The other good thing is that I don’t have to go to each meet. I usually take off two or three months a year and travel. Last year I went to Germany for a few months.”

“What did you do there?” Mary asked.

“Not much. I had some distant relatives there but mostly I just wandered around the country. I did one of those boat cruises up the Rhone.”

Samuel was getting bored and started playing with his food; when he started flinging it around Mary got up to get him ready for bed. When Mary was out of the room I asked Pat, “Well, what do you think of Mary?”

“She’s a good cook. Those burritos were dynamite.”

“How about her looks?”

“She’s a fine figure of a woman.”

“You mean her tits?”

“Well, she is well endowed.”

Mary came back while I was getting us some more beers. Mary started to clear the table.

“Mary, Pat was staring at your tits. He says you’re well endowed!”

Mary frowned and Pat looked embarrassed just as I’d hoped.

“Don’t mind Duane. He likes trying to embarrass people, don’t you Duane?”

“What’s embarrassing about big tits? Just to show everybody how unembarrassing it is, why don’t you show Pat your tits?”

“No, Duane, I’m not going to show Pat my tits.”

“Oh come on Mary, Pat really wants to see your tits, don’t you Pat?”

“Leave me out of your little marital comedy.”

“Do you want coffee, Pat?” Mary asked.

“No thanks, I’ll just continue with beer.”

They were ignoring me.